The Female Manufacturers Complaint:

BEING

The Humble Petition

OF

Dorothy Diſtaff, Abigail Spinning-Wheel, Eleanor Reel, &c. Spinſters,

TO THE

Lady *Rebecca Woollpack.*

Price 3 *d.*

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ABIGAIL SPINNING-WHEEL,
ELEANOR REEL, *&c.*
Spinsters,

TO THE

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WITH

A Respectful Epistle to Sir *R---- St----!*, concerning some Omissions of the utmost Importance in his Lady's Wardrobe.

By Monsieur de Brocade *of* Paris.

LONDON:
Printed for W. BOREHAM at the *Angel* in *Pater-noster Row.* 1720.

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To the Honourable and moſt Excellent Matron, Mrs. Rebecca Woollpack,

The Humble Repreſentation and Petition of Dorothy Diſtaff, Abigail Spinning-Wheel, Eleanor Reel, *of St.* Edmunds-bury *in the County of* Suffolk, *Spinſters; in Behalf of themſelves and many Thouſands of the Female Manufacturers of Wooll and Worſted Yarn in the ſaid County, and in the Counties of* Norfolk, Eſſex, Huntington, Cambridge, Hertford, *&c.*

Humbly Sheweth,

THAT Your Petitioners have for many Years been chearfully Employ'd in the Woollen Manufactures of *England*, that is to ſay, in the Spinning of Worſted Yarn for the Stuff Weavers of *Norwich*

wich and of *London*, by which we have very comfortably maintain'd and ſupported our ſelves in ſuch manner, as that we have upon all Occaſions appear'd decently at Church; that is to ſay, with a clean Pinner, a Cherry-colour'd Chin-knot, a white Apron, and a clean Pair of Gloves, ſo that our Sweet.hearts have not been aſham'd of us; nay, ſome of us, who have ſet to our Work harder than ordinary, have obtain'd, by long Labour and good Houſwifry, a narrow *Buckinghamſhire* Edging to our Pinnars, to the great Improvement of our Neighbour-Laſſes of that County, and the Encouragement of the Manufacture of Bone-Lace alſo.

We alſo farther humbly repreſent, That in ſome Parts of the County where our Fellow-Spinners are poorer, and have not Fathers and Mothers to work for them, as we who are good Farmers and Husbandmens Daughters, may be ſuppos'd to have; but where, on the contrary, the Money earn'd by the Labour of the poor Women and Children is employ'd for their dayly Subſiſtence, yet that even there, may it pleaſe your Ladyſhip, the induſtrious poor Women have, by the Help of the Spinning of Worſted Yarn, as aforeſaid, maintain'd their ſaid Families,

Families, and kept themſelves and their ſaid Children from Miſery, and from being chargeable to the Pariſh, tho' with very hard Work and the utmoſt Induſtry and Application.

But now, and't pleaſe your Ladyſhip, there is ſad and dreadful News come among us, as well from *Norwich* as from *London*, where our Maſters who employ us ſell their Yarn, and from whence they always, till now, had Encouragement to ſet us to Work, as alſo from all other Parts of the Country, ſignifying to us, that all the Ladies of *London*, the Honourable and Right Honourable Spinſters of *Cheapſide* and all over *England*, and even your Ladyſhip among the reſt, have on a ſudden, and to our great Surprize and Amazement, given over the Uſe and Wearing of the good honeſt old *Engliſh* Manufactures of Wooll and of Worſted, and of Silk mixt with Wooll, Things in which we always believ'd here in the Country that we look'd as pretty, and appear'd as tempting and agreeable to our Lovers and Sweet-hearts, as in any Thing we can get to wear, and in which we have been told the City-Spinſters have been as high and as proud as ever they can or will be in any Thing elſe.

And

And this is not all, but and't pleaſe your Ladyſhip, our ſaid Maſters tell us the heavy Tidings, that upon this Humour of the Ladies, many Woollen Stuffs, and Stuffs mixt with Silk, and even Silks themſelves, are in a very great meaſure laid aſide; that ſome of them are quite loſt, and thrown out of Sale, ſuch as Brilliants and Pulerays, Antherines and Bumbazines, Sattinets and Chiverets, Oraguella's, Grazetts, great Variety of Silk and Worſted Footworks, Flower'd Grazetts, Flower'd Silk and Worſted Tammy Draughts, and Damasks, Fine Colour'd Crapes, *&c.* and that they cannot ſell their Worſted Yarn as uſual at *Norwich* and *London*, neither have they any more Work for us to do, any Wooll to put out, or Money to pay for the Spinning, the Market being ſtopt as aforeſaid.

May it pleaſe your Ladyſhip then to conſider what a ſad and deplorable Condition we are now reduc'd to in the Country; for as to us, your Petitioners, tho' we are as above, Farmers and Husbandmen's Daughters, and our Parents do make ſhift to give us Victuals and Drink, yet that we are utterly ruin'd, for we can now get no new Cloaths, no Knots, no Edgings, as we obſerv'd to

your

your Ladyſhips, and without which your Ladyſhip well knows we ſhall get no Sweet-hearts, for we cannot go to the Market nor to the Fair, as uſual; and your Ladyſhip knows what will be the miſerable Conſequences of theſe Things, for that the young Men do not come after us now, to our Fathers Houſes, as they uſed to do, but always expect to ſee us at Market-Towns; ſo that if ſome ſpeedy Courſe be not taken in this Matter, we are in Danger of being utterly undone.

And as for the poor Women and Children in the Country, as above, whoſe Employment and whole Subſiſtence depends upon the Manufactures, and who muſt Spin, or they and their Families muſt ſtarve. It were impoſſible, could your Ladyſhip hear the ſad Lamentations of thoſe Miſerable Families, but your Heart would bleed for them, and you would never wear any Thing that would contribute ſo much to the Diſtreſs of the Poor.

But beſides this, we humbly crave Leave to lay before your Ladyſhip, that, as we are inform'd, all this ſuddain Change, which is apparently to the Ruin of ſo many Thouſands of your Petitioners, is brought about in Favour

of a tawdery, Pie-ſpotted, flabby, ragged, low-priz'd Thing, call'd *Callicoe*; a Foreigner by Birth; made the L...d knows where, by a Parcel of *Heathens* and *Pagans*, that worſhip the Devil, and work for a Half-penny a Day.

We likewiſe humbly repreſent to your Ladyſhip, that all this Miſery and Diſtreſs, which is and will be the Conſequence of the Ladies falling, with ſuch a Guſt, into this new outlandiſh Faſhion, is laid wholly at the Door of your own Fancies; that you have not been prompted to it by your Husbands, or invited into it by your Sweet-hearts or Lovers; for the Men, it ſeems, do not wear any of it themſelves, nor do they find that you ſave them anyMoney in theirPockets by it, as we ſhall fully prove to you afterwards: We ſay, it is all laid at your Door, and we are given to underſtand, that while the Men in vain have repreſented to your Ladyſhip, that it will be ruinous and deſtructive to the Trade of the Nation, and to the Woollen Manufactures, and deſir'd you, tho' to no Purpoſe, to be perſuaded to lay it aſide, you are all the more obſtinate in the Uſe of it; ſo that they are now oblig'd to lay it before the Parliament, in order to *force* you to alter the Mode, and to dreſs in

the

the good, honeſt, home-ſpun Manufactures of *England*; which, by the Way, will be not only much againſt the Grain, as to the Faſhion itſelf, but will alſo be much to your Diſhonour, that you ſhould be ſo commanded by the Men to lay it down, and be brought to do it by FORCE.

We moſt earneſtly intreat your Ladyſhip, therefore, to conſider what great Reproach you are going to bring upon yourſelves, and upon us all; and what Injury even your Children and Grand-Children of our Sex may ſuſtain, by thus bringing us all under a Sort of Subjection to the Men, in the Modes of our Dreſs; *a Yoke* from Huſbands, *which neither we or our Mothers have ever been able to bear.* It ought, doubtleſs, to be above the Dignity of our Sex to be thus brought under this Bondage; and, therefore, we moſt humbly beſeech you to let this Change be the Work of your own Choice; and not ſuffer it to be impoſed upon you by the Men, who will certainly, if they carry this Point, take upon them for the future to bring in Sumptuary Laws upon us, and oblige us to wear ſuch Cloaths as they think fit; or otherwiſe, which would be intolerable, (and which we hope you would make an Inſurrection rather than ſubmit to) oblige the Ladies to wear no

Cloaths any richer than their Huſbands can pay for.

But beſides all this, we deſire your Ladyſhip, in the humbleſt manner poſſible, to take the Condition of our poor Sex into your moſt ſerious Conſideration: We moſt paſſionately repreſent to your Ladyſhip how much you are really intruſted in this Affair; how the Worſhipful your Ladyſhip's Grandfather was a *Woollpack*, the good old Squire rais'd all his Fortunes by us Spinners, and many a comely Country Laſs has manufactur'd for him. Old Sir *Harry Wooll-combe*, of *Bury St. Edmonds*, was alſo near of Kin to you, Madam, and he got a great Eſtate from the *Comb-Pot*, and made all his Daughters Ladies and Gentle-folks. Beſides, your Ladyſhip is ally'd, by ſome Removes, to a great many Right Honourable Perſons, the direct Offſpring of the moſt ancient Families in *Suffolk* and *Norfolk*, ſuch as the Families of the *Oumblers*, the *Staplers*, and the ancient *Treſſel-Beaters*, and others. L...d, Madam, can you forget the Graves of your Anceſtors, and the grey Hairs of your Fore-Fathers? If they ſhould riſe from the Dead now, and ſee you dreſs'd up in your painted Tranguins, and *Eaſt India* Rags, while all the poor Spinners hung

about

about you crying for Bread and for Work; good your Ladyſhip, what think you my good Maſters would ſay to it, would they not carry you away a Pick-a-pack.

Beſides, may it pleaſe your good Ladyſhip to conſider, that if the Honour of your Family is not ſupported and main-tain'd, which, by the way, can never be done, if a Stop is not put to the Wearing theſe Callicoe Trumpery, you can never maintain or ſupport your Character; for, we beſeech your Ladyſhip, if the Wooll comes to lie on Hand, and not be ſpun and work'd up, what will all the Family of the *Wooll-Packs* come to? They will certainly be laid by till they rot, and come to Rags. We have often ſeen, Madam, ſome of the largeſt and moſt flouriſhing of you *Wooll-Packs*, when the Market has been dull, and the Wooll would not go off, ſuffer great Loſs, and be reduc'd to a very tatter'd Condition.

Nay, let me recommend it to your Conſideration, that if this goes on, the beſt of your Expectations, and of thoſe other Ladies of your Family, may be to be ſent over to *France*; and there, if nothing worſe ſhould happen to you, yet you muſt change your Religion, and you would

would all become Popiſh *Woollpacks*, whether you would or no.

And as for us poor Spinſters, we muſt certainly go away to *France* alſo. Nay, there is a particular Reaſon for that, which we have not mention'd yet; and that is, that here is abundance of the young Men, ſuch as we uſed to pitch upon for our beſt Thoughts, and who, when they had Work, were pretty clean Fellows, and went well dreſs'd a *Sundays*; who were Manufacturers, and liv'd very well, have been forc'd ſince to go down to the Sea-Side, and there they tell us are *French* Folks and *Dutch* Folks at *Ipſwich*, and other Places, that give them Money to go Abroad, and ſo we never ſee them more: And aſſure yourſelf, and't pleaſe your Ladyſhip, that if all our Sweet-hearts run away, we will all go after them, and then you may e'en ſpin your Wooll-Packs yourſelf.

But we hope your Ladyſhip will be prevail'd upon by the Tears of your own Sex, and by the Miſeries of the Poor, which you cannot be inſenſible of, to commiſerate the poor Country, and ſet your helping Hand to a Work ſo neceſſary to be done, and (which is more than all the reſt) is ſo eaſy for you to do.

Which

Which brings us to the main Subject of this your Petitioners humble Repreſentation, namely, That your Ladyſhip would conſider how much it is in your Power, at one Turn of your Hand, to put an End to all theſe Miſeries of your Country, and to wipe up the Tears of all the poor Families in the Nation, by only vouchſafing to ſubmit your Fancy to your Reaſon, and by bringing your Humour and your Judgment to correſpond a little together.

Let us ſuppoſe, for once, that your Fancy, at leaſt for the preſent, according to the laudable Cuſtom of our Sex, does now run for the Gewgaws of the *Eaſt Indies*, as ſometimes it has done, in former Days, for thoſe of *France*. But, ſure, when you are convinc'd, that this Uſage of yours tends to the entire Deſtruction of the Manufactures of your Country, that it will of Courſe turn Thouſands of poor Women and Children into the Streets a begging, and to the Pariſhes for Support; that the Trade ſhall be univerſally influenc'd by it, and that a great many deviliſh, thieving, running, cheating Trades, are brought in among us by it, to the Ruin of the fair Trader; we ſay, when your Ladyſhip is convinc'd of this, we are perſuaded you will throw your fine

Chints

Chints Gown and Petticoat in the Fire, and declare that you will never more wear any Thing ſo prejudicial to the *Britiſh* Manufacture, or ſo dangerous to the Worſhipful Family of the *Wooll-Packs*.

Permit us, and't pleaſe your Ladyſhip, in the next Place, humbly to repreſent to your Conſideration how abſolutely it is reſerv'd in your own Power, and in your own Hands, to effect this; and to all Intents and Purpoſes to reſcue all the poor Manufacturers in the Nation from the Bondage and Miſery they are now fallen into.

As the Evil is laid at your Door, ſo the Remedy is in your Hands; for if you are the Cauſe, you may certainly be the Cure. May Heaven dictate to you, how, being the original Spring of all our Miſfortunes, you are under an effectual Obligation to endeavour the redreſſing this Grievance.

As the general Wearing of Callicoes is the Complaint, the general Leaving them off will be the Cure; the Faſhion is the Grievance, becauſe it is a Faſhion; 'tis in the Ladies Power at once to make it odious and abhorr'd all over the Kingdom: You are able to make it as much out of Faſhion, as you brought it into Faſhion at once: You gave it your Sanc-

tion,

tion, by approving and eſpouſing it, and you can ſink it again by the Blaſt of your Mouths.

Take the Honour of it, Madam, from the Men, give them nothing to boaſt of for reforming their Wives, but make their Wives triumph over them, by telling them, that you, whenever you pleaſe, can diſtreſs them; and again, whenever you pleaſe, remove their Grievance.

The Men can make no ſuch Alteration, they cannot decry or oblige us to the Diſuſe of any Thing; but if you turn your Eyes this or that Way, you can raiſe or ſuppreſs what you pleaſe to the Publick Benefit of the Nation.

To what Purpoſe ſhould we trouble our Repreſentatives with our Complaints? Eaſe us, Madam, your ſelves of the Trouble. If the Women in *England* will but ſet their Hands to this Work, not a Callicoe, not a Piece of Linnen printed or ſtain'd ſhall be ſold, or worn in *England*: Then all our Petitions will be at an End, they that bid the People petition will bid them be eaſy, all the Manufactures of *Great Britain* ſhall revive, and the Women will have the Glory of having ſaved the Nation.

We moſt humbly put your Ladyſhip in Mind how the Men inſult us upon

this Head; how they inſolently tell us, that tho' the Women may ſometimes do more Good than Hurt, they never had the Opportunity of doing more Hurt than Good but they were ſure to take hold of it.

And thus they conclude, that our Deliverance, *to uſe their own Words*, is out of Sight, becauſe it is in the Hands of the Women, who always did Hurt rather than Good.

Contradict them, we beſeech your Ladyſhip, in this Article, and let the whole Country be ſaved by your Hand: All the Petitions then from the ſeveral Parts of the Kingdom ſhall be remov'd, and we, the poor Country Manufacturers and Spinners, will pay our Homage to you Ladies of *London*, and the Honour of Delivering the whole Family of the Spinners ſhall be your own.

In order to this, the Prayer of our Petition concludes to your Ladyſhip, That you would be pleas'd to take the ſad and deplorable Condition of your poor Petitioners into your Conſideration; and, in a Word, that you and all the Ladies of your Family, the Renowned Family of the Woollpacks, *with all your Family and Servants, may, by your Order, lay aſide your Callicoe Gowns*

and Petticoats of all Sorts, and declare publickly that none of you will any more be dreſs'd in them, whether we call Dreſſing the Set-Dreſs for Abroad, or the Diſhabilè for the Morning, but that you wou'd reaſſume thoſe many pretty Stuffs which are already Invented by our Weavers, or which may be Invented to pleaſe the Fancy, in the room of the Callicoes; and your Petitioners, leaving all other Application, ſhall for ever Pray for all Happineſs to the Noble Family of the Woollpacks.

Dorothy Diſtaff.

The *Mark of*

Abigail Spinning Wheel.

Eleanor Reel.

A

Reſpectful EPISTLE

TO

Sir *R----d S-----le*,

AUTHOR

OF THE

SPINSTER.

AFter acknowledging, Sir, your very good Meaning in your late Performance for the Encouragement of the good Wives in their compleat Way of Dreſſing, it ſeems very ſtrange that you who are ſo exquiſitely read in the Literature

Literature of the *Toylette*, that could rate the very Smocks of the Ladies, and tell as well how much they coſt a Yard, as how many Yards of *Holland* there are in them; I ſay, that you ſhould omit ſome Articles in the Lady's Wardrobe, that are ſo neceſſary to compleat the various Appearances of a Fine Lady: And particularly,

	l.	*s.*	*d.*
A Hat of *Legborn* ——	1	10	0
A Beaver and Feather for the Foreſt ——	3	00	0
A Riding Suit, with Embroidery of *Paris* ——	47	10	0
Three Dreſſes for the Maſquerade, two from *Venice*, 18 *l.* each ——	36	00	0
One from *Paris* of Green Velvet *a la Sultanneſſe*, ſet with Pearls and Rubies —— ——	123	15	0
	211	15	0

After, Sir, you had gone this length, you ought to have convers'd with *Tom Drawboy* the Mercer upon *Ludgate-hill*, who

who would for Two Bottles have confeſs'd that they (*Mercers*) have about twelve or fifteen Maſter-Weavers at this Time in Work in *Spittle-fields*, and all kept in full Buſineſs, making *French* Brocaded Silks for the Ladies; that is to ſay, for thoſe Nice Ladies of Quality who do not take up with any Thing but what is right *French*.

It muſt be confeſs'd that this is a very great Help to the Weavers at this the Time of their unhappy Circumſtances; and therefore thoſe Ladies are exceeding kind, and great Supporters of the Silk Manufactures of *Great Britain*, who are pleaſed thus far to ſhut their Eyes upon ſo extraordinary an Occaſion, and be put off with *Spittle-fields* inſtead of the *Fauxbourgs* of *Paris*. And as they have no Wrong done them, the Goods made in *Spittlefields* being not only as good, but every way ſuperior to thoſe made in *Paris*, 'tis hop'd they will not think them leſs *French*, for being made in their own Country.

There are ſome other Trifles, Sir, you had forgot alſo, which I ſhall not now enumerate, as ſome Eſſences, Pomatums, eſpecially that of *the grand Occaſion*,

Occaſion, and ſuch like Toys, which muſt not be reckon'd to coſt the Lady leſs than 150 *l.* a Year, but of theſe hereafter.

I moſt humbly beg your Worſhip's Pardon for theſe Hints, not doubting but you will make a good Uſe of them as they occur in your next SPINSTER.

Spitter de Fel,
Jan. 2, 1720.

I am, Sir,

Your moſt Obedient Servant,

Tiſſerando de Brocade.

FINIS.

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